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ABSTRACT

The Northwest Select High School Tournament was the result of several concerns among college and high school debate coaches, including the lack of informational exchange between Washington and Oregon teams and an extended opportunity for summer debate institutes and recruitment possibilities. The objective was to have a top-quality tournament hosted each year by an alternate college. A committee of college and high school debate coaches invited 12 teams from each state based on their records. Called the "Heart of the Northwest," the first tournament took place in 1981, and was won by Washington schools. The following year, the Oregon schools won. Overall response to this concept of rewarding excellence with invitational competition was favorable. However, four problems discouraged participation and resulted in the cancellation of the 1983 tournament: (1) the December date was a hindrance to full participation, (2) a prestigious California tournament became a source of conflict, (3) a central geographic location was too far for outlying schools to attend, and (4) elements of over-competitive rivalry entered into the attitudes of the high school teams around the two states. Interest still remains high in this type of select tournament and --provided these problems can be overcome--future programs may be able to regenerate the Heart of the Northwest Invitational Tournament. (HTH)

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THE SELECT HIGH SCHOOL TOURNAMENT: REWARDING EXCELLENCE

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THE SELECT HIGH SCHOOL TOURNAMENT
REWARDING EXCELLENCE

INTRODUCTION

The origin of the Northwest Select High School Tournament began as a result of several concerns among college and high school coaches. Three of the main concerns will be discussed.

First, because of the nature of high school competition in regard to budget restrictions and traveling distances, there is little informational exchange between teams in Washington and Oregon, even though in such close geographical proximity. This limits the students' educational growth and the potential for the high school teams that win NFL district or state tournaments to succeed at NFL Nationals.

Secondly, because of the interest and support of colleges in high school tournaments, summer debate institutes and resulting recruitment possibilities, an extended opportunity for this was seen in the Select High School Tournament. This would be an opportunity to draw the top students from these high schools into

Northwest colleges. It would also further growth and cooperation between high school and college forensics in the Northwest.

Thirdly, the Select High School Tournament would offer an excellent opportunity for high calibre competition afforded by selecting the twelve top teams from each state of Washington and Oregon, which may lead to topic information or theory exchange between the two states.

After talking with numerous high school and college coaches throughout the Northwest, it was decided that increased interaction between the high school and college forensic teams of Washington and Oregon would be a direct benefit to Northwest forensics and could be improved with the instigation of a select high school tournament.

ORIGIN OF THE SELECT HIGH SCHOOL TOURNAMENT

The concept was to have a top-quality high school tournament hosted by a Northwest college. It was hoped that the place of the tournament would be moved each year so that different colleges would have an

opportunity to host this event. A committee was selected of three college debate coaches and two high school coaches to pick the twelve teams from each state that would be invited. The teams were selected on a basis of cumulative record at first semester tournaments, and on success at summer debate institutes. This selection process was based on the precedent set by Burleson High School in Burleson, Texas, and by Harvard University.

The first tournament of this type in the nation was conceived by Blair Lybert of Burleson High School in 1976. Three teams from were chosen from each of ten surrounding NFL districts in four states. This provided a great opportunity for the top teams from each district to debate top teams from other districts and states before the state and national tournaments, and to learn new analysis techniques and case areas.

In 1977, Harvard University used a similar concept in a select invitational event. They invited twelve teams to participate in a preliminary round-robin, three days prior to their regular high school tournament. This was Harvard University's reward for excellence for nationally competitive, top-calibre teams.

Based upon the great Kansas tournament, Heart of America, and the concept of top-quality, high-level competition, the name "Heart of the Northwest" was chosen for this Select High School tournament.

FIRST HEART OF THE NORTHWEST INVITATIONAL TOURNAMENT

The first tournament was on December 20 and 21, during the Christmas break of 1981 at Mt. Hood Community College. This date was chosen for two reasons. First, there were no Northwest high school or college tournaments during this week that would conflict with other tournaments and hinder participaion in the event. Secondly, since Washington schools were on Christmas vacation, participating teams would not have to count a tournament on the "four tournament restriction rule." This rule states that no Washington state high school team may attend more than four tournaments in which a day of school is missed. Since the tournament did not fall on a school day, it did not count as a tournament under Washington State rules. These restriction did not affect Oregon teams.

The twelve teams selected from Oregon in 1981 were Sam Barlow, Centennial, Lakeridge, Marshfield, Medford (two teams), North Eugene, Reynolds, South Eugene (two teams), South Salem and Sunset.

The twelve teams selected from Washington were Bellevue, Freeman, Gonzaga Prep., Kentridge, Mead (two teams), Newport, Puyallup, John Rogers (two teams), Sehome, and West Valley.

Coaches and teams were encouraged to stay at a centrally-located motel. This would allow maximal exchange of information and ideas between the state teams in the evenings, following daily rounds of competition. A coaches' reception was provided at the motel after the first day of competition to allow interaction between high school coaches from the two states and with college coaches.

Tournament fees were kept to a minimum, at $10 per team, to insure maximum participation at a relatively low cost to the schools. Fees were collected to pay for trophies, ballots and the coaches' reception. Judging was provided, free of charge by experienced college debaters from the Northwest in the interest of

furthering educational growth in issue debate. At the beginning of each debate, judging philosophies were presented orally to the teams. At the end of each debate, oral critiques were presented by the judges. High school coaches were only required to judge two preliminary rounds of competition.

After the preliminary rounds, a ballot-check was allowed for the high school coaches to insure accuracy in the elimination rounds. This idea was favorably received by the participating coaches.

There were six preliminary rounds. The first four rounds were pre-matched and each team debated teams from the other state. The final two rounds were power-matched. During the preliminary rounds, each state won 72 debates and lost 72 debates. There were four teams from each state that advanced to the quarter-finals and two teams from each state that advanced to the semi-finals. The final round was between Washington teams -- Gonzaga Prep. and Mead. The " bragging rights" for this tournament were won by Washington as they had two more victories in the tournament. Mead High School was the winner of the first annual Heart of the Northwest Invi-

tational Tournament.

Representatives from Western Washington University, Pacific Lutheran University, Whitman College, University of Oregon, Gonzaga University, and Mt. Hood Community College attended the tournament to discuss with high school students the benefits of college forensics. Seventeen students from this tournament later participated in college forensics in the Northwest.

At the three disctict NFL and two state tournaments from the Washington-Oregon area, every team that advanced to semi-finals in the five tournaments had participated in the Heart of the Northwest Invitational. The Oregon State champion from Medford High School finished third at NFL Nationals at the University of San Francisco in 1982.

SECOND ANNUAL HEART OF THE NORTHWEST INVITATIONAL

For the second year, college programs from Whitman College, University of Puget Sound, Western Washington University and University of Oregon volunteered to host the tournament. The University of Oregon, under the direction of Dr. David Frank, was ultimately chosen as

the site for the 1982 Heart of the Northwest Invitational.

Oregon high schools won the "bragging rights" at this tournament. The results were the same as the first tournament with each state winning 72 debates and losing 72 debates. Four from each state made quarter-finals. Two from each state were in semi-finals. The final round was between South Eugene and Ashland high schools, from Oregon. Ashland High School won the Second Annual Heart of the Northwest Invitational Tournament.

A team from Bethel High School in Washington who did not even qualify to compete in the Heart of the Northwest Tournament won the Washington State tournament and finished third at NFL Nationals in 1983, showing a level of increased quality of competition in the Northwest for a second straight year. Fourteen students who participated in the Heart of the Northwest Tournament were recruited by Northwest colleges in 1983.

Overall response to this concept of rewarding excellence with invitational competition was favorable. High school teams and coaches endeavored throughout the

year to improve their records and gain an invitation to this prestigious event. Students who were questioned felt they benefitted greatly from the activity and coaches favored interaction with the other state and with college programs. Northwest forensics in general was enhanced as recruitment seemed to be at all-time high for encouraging students to continue participation in college forensics.

PROBLEMS OF 1983

There seemed to be four main problems that discouraged participation and resulted in cancellation of the event in 1983:

1. The December dates were a hinderance to full participation for those who had to sacrifice part of their Christmas vacations. If all invited teams could not participate, the original concept of top-level competition would be circumvented.

2. As a few high school programs began to thrive on

inter-state competition, interest in the prestigious Loyola-Redlands Christmas swing tournament in California provided a source of conflict with the Heart of the Northwest. Top Washington and Oregon teams now had interest in participating at a tournament which provided national level competition with teams from Washington, Oregon, California, Arizona, Utah and Texas. While meeing the goal of increased quality competition for Northwest teams, this new interest undermined the Northwest inter-state concept of the Heart of the Northwest Tournament.

3. If the tournament was consistently held in a centralized location for the majority of schools, such as Tacoma, Washington, or Portland, Oregon, southern Oregon and eastern Washington schools felt it was too far a travel distance to attend. Depending on the location of the tournament, they also argued that they would sacrifice one extra day of travel each way because of their geographic distance.

4. An element of over-competitive rivalry entered into

the attitudes of the high school teams around the two states. Some felt that Christmas was too early in the year to correctly determine the top teams in each state. They favored a date later in the season, closer to the dates of the state tournaments, and after the teams had achieved their full potential as debaters. The colleges were not able to accomodate this request because of conflicts in calendar dates and vacation schedules.

CONCLUSION

Interest still remains in this type of select high school tournament, and in its original concept of rewarding excellence in forensic and academic achievement. Provided that problems which forced 1983 cancellation of this event can be overcome, a high school or college program in the future may be able to re-generate the concept of the Heart of the Northwest Invitational Tournament.